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### Introduction

There is a protracted, bloody struggle that is being conducted between Israel and the Palestinian terrorist organizations, which has claimed a multitude of victims to date. This struggle reached its peak in the period of the “present conflict” – the conflict that began in late September 2000, and which is known among the Palestinians as the al-Aqsa Intifada. Outside of the arena of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, too, over recent years we have witnessed a steady increase in regional and international terrorist activity, as a result of which the issue of terrorism has become a major problem in the eyes of many countries.

Notwithstanding, there is no agreed-upon definition of the concept of “terrorism,” and the wide variety of definitions and interpretations depend to a great extent on the point of view of the observer. Acts of violence that are considered in a certain place as acts of terrorism may be considered, elsewhere, as armed struggle or legitimate resistance. Thus, a terrorist in the eyes of one person may be, in the eyes of others, a revolutionary, a freedom fighter, a *shahid* [martyr] or a guerilla fighter.<sup>1</sup> One of the common distinctions is, in accordance with that which has been set forth above, the distinction between terrorist and guerilla.<sup>2</sup> According to this distinction, the use of terrorism is intended for the purpose of the achievement of political goals by means of systematic, deliberate attacks on civilians (or non-combatant targets). On the other hand, guerilla actions are also intended for the purpose of the achievement of political goals, but are directed against military personnel (or combatant targets).<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are those who would add to the definition of terrorism the element of harm to innocent civilians. As Boaz Ganor points out, this addition makes the definition even more subjective, in that it is contingent upon the question of who is an innocent civilian.<sup>4</sup> Thus for example, the terrorist organizations fighting against Israel have claimed more than once that its citizens do not fall within the realm of innocent [civilians], insofar as they are partners to “the oppression of the Palestinian people and the occupation of its land.”

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<sup>1</sup> Boaz Ganor demonstrates this with an example taken from the British media: on one particular day, the media in Britain reports on an attack by **guerilla fighters** on an Israeli bus at Aroer Junction, and on the elimination of a number of **terrorists** from the Irish Republican Army by British security forces. Ganor points out that in Israel, those **guerilla fighters** attacked a civilian bus and killed some of its passengers, while the Irish **terrorists** were eliminated in the course of a planned ambush by British security personnel, when the former were not armed. See Boaz Ganor, “Definition of Terror,” *Ma'arachot*, 333, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> The word guerilla derives from the Spanish, and means “little war” (*Guerra* – “war” in Spanish). The term was coined in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Spanish conducted, in northern Spain, a guerilla war against the French army, that had invaded their land.

<sup>3</sup> Boaz Ganor, “Definition of Terror,” p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

This document reviews the main organizations that are fighting against Israel, and presents a brief overview of their most salient characteristics. It focuses on the organizations that are operating during the period of the present conflict, but the review is not limited to the years 2000 - 2004, and it also includes a historical perspective of the sources from which they rose, their ideological positions and their patterns of activity in years past. The document also deals with the non-Palestinian organizations whose current activity against Israel supports (and inflames) the al-Aqsa Intifada from the outside – Hezbollah and al-Qaeda. In addition, this review mentions several organizations whose activity was significant in the past but which are no longer currently active. The first part of this document deals with the secular organizations – the [various] arms of Fatah and the leftist fronts. The second part deals with the Islamic organizations, which entered the arena of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at a later stage, relative to the secular organizations, and which brought with them new fundamental concepts and patterns of action, such as suicide attacks and *jihad*.



## The Secular Organizations



### Fatah and its Arms

#### The Fatah Movement – General Background

Fatah – the reversed initials of *Harkat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniya* – “Palestinian National Liberation Movement”.<sup>5</sup> Also, the word *fatah* in Arabic denotes victory and conquest.<sup>6</sup> The Fatah movement was established in Kuwait in 1959. It raised the banner of armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine and, over the years, it became the leader of the Palestinian national struggle. Fatah saw itself, first and foremost, as a national movement, without a defined social ideology, and the notion of popular armed struggle was its guiding principle. Fatah’s nationalism was characterized by pragmatism and by distancing itself from the Marxist-Leninist tendencies of other Palestinian groups and, on the other hand – by the inclusion of traditional and Islamic themes. In the view of Fatah, the Palestinians must themselves fight to liberate their land, and postpone involvement in controversial social, political and ideological issues until after victory has been achieved.<sup>7</sup>

During the first five years of the movement’s existence, it operated as a secret, underground organization. On January 1, 1965, it carried out its first military operation against Israel (a failed attempt to sabotage the National Water Carrier). During the second half of the 1960s, the movement became the dominant element within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and in effect took it over, up to the point that the two became almost completely identical. Yassir

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education, Information Center-Publications Service, **Fatah, Tanzim, Hamas and Others: A Guide to Palestinian Organizations**, Jerusalem 5763 [=2003], p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Avraham Sela, **The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East**, Continuum, New York, 2002, p. 682.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Arafat, the founder of the movement and its leader from its inception, also served from 1969 as chairman of the PLO.<sup>8</sup>

Toward the end of the 1960s, the PLO established itself within Jordanian territory, and there they set up a quasi state within a state, thus posing a clear threat to King Hussein's rule. This situation came to an end with the events of September 1970 – "Black September," as it is referred to by the Palestinians. Following bitter fighting between the Jordanian army and fighters of Fatah and the other PLO factions, the headquarters of the PLO was expelled from Jordan and it moved to Lebanon, where it began to establish itself. After Fatah was expelled from Jordan, it started to adopt a new form of military operation which, up until that time, had been denied them – terrorist operations in the international arena, which were carried out under the cover name of "Black September" and were comprised mainly of aircraft hijackings and attacks on airports. One of the terrorist attacks that was carried out by Black September was the slaughter of the 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. That year, another unit within the framework of the Fatah was established in Beirut – "Force 17" – which was intended to serve as Fatah's internal security unit of and to protect the lives of the movement's leaders. The unit's first commander was Ali Hassan Salameh, who was involved in the killing at the Munich Olympics.<sup>9</sup> Over time, the unit became a kind of elite unit within Fatah, and during the Lebanon War its brigades fought against the Israel Defense Forces. In August 1982, the PLO headquarters – and with it the Fatah fighters and members of Force 17 – were evacuated from Beirut to their new home – Tunisia.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Rise of the Tanzim**

The Tanzim (Arabic for "Organization") is the principal body within the Fatah movement, its field organization, controlling its popular activities at various levels.<sup>11</sup> The Tanzim was set up in 1983 with the aim of reorganizing Fatah's internal operations, that is, within the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while the PLO headquarters and Fatah leadership sat in Tunis. Hence, the members of the Tanzim were field operatives, and were responsible for the movement's operations within the intra-Palestinian arena. During the First Intifada, which began in December 1987 and continued up until the end of 1992, the members of Tanzim were the

<sup>8</sup> The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in May 1964 at Palestinian Congress held in East Jerusalem (then under Jordanian rule). The organization's leader from its founding was Ahmed Shukeiri, but in late December 1967, Arafat was able to bring about his resignation. In February 1969, at the fifth session of the Palestinian National Council (the PLO's parliamentary body) Arafat himself was elected as chairman of the PLO.

<sup>9</sup> He headed the unit for seven years, until killed by a bomb that was hidden beneath his car in Beirut on January 22, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, too, Force 17 continued terrorist activity, such as the murder of the Israeli sailors in Cyprus on September 25, 1985.

<sup>11</sup> Intelligence Branch – Research Division, **Palestinian Terrorist organizations**, June 23, 2004 (prepared at the request of the Knesset Research and Information Center), p. 2.



spearhead of Fatah's activity against Israel.<sup>12</sup> As a result, those years saw the development, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, of a local Palestinian military and political leadership made up of Tanzim people who, although identified with the PLO and the Fatah movement, were to a large extent independent in their activities from the external leadership overseas.

The tension between the local and overseas leadership of the Fatah movement increased even more following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, as a result of the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993. Yassir Arafat, who in June 1994 became chairman of the Palestinian Authority, may have included many of the Tanzim within the ruling institutions of the Palestinian Authority, but made sure to appoint his close associates from "outside" (the "old guard") to key positions in its institutions, particularly its security apparatus. Thus, for example, approximately 2,500 members of Force 17, who returned from Tunis together with the PLO leadership, were absorbed into Arafat's Presidential Guard.

In effect, with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Arafat turned the Tanzim into a kind of unofficial, paramilitary militia of Fatah, largely as a counterweight to the rise in power of the Islamic organizations, headed by Hamas. However, during this period of time the Tanzim also operated largely as a force separate from the official security apparatus of the Palestinian Authority. This apparatus, and the "outside" people who were placed at its head, were increasingly perceived among the Palestinian public as disconnected from the people, and were often accused (and are still accused) of corruption. In comparison, the internal leadership, based on "graduates" of the First Intifada, the members of the Tanzim, were perceived as an innate, authentic leadership, a leadership that rose from within the people and is still connected to it.<sup>13</sup> One member of this leadership is Marwan Barghouti, the commander of the Tanzim in the West Bank, who has been imprisoned in Israel since April 15, 2002, because of his involvement in terrorist activity during the course of the present conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the Islamic organizations (Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad), which based the bulk of their forces in the Gaza Strip, the main power centers of Fatah in general, and of Tanzim in particular, are located within the West Bank, and particularly in Bir Zeit University, in Bethlehem, and a-Najah University in Nablus. The Tanzim receives its funding from the Palestinian Authority, and it is the latter that provided it with the bulk of the weapons in its

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Education, Information Center-Publications Service, **Fatah, Tanzim, Hamas and Others: A Guide to Palestinian Organizations**, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Barghouti was one of the leaders of the Intifada in 1987, and at that time was also imprisoned in Israel for two years. Following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Barghouti was elected to the Palestinian Parliament as a representative for the Ramallah district, and served as the General Secretary of Fatah in the West Bank. He was arrested by the Israel Defense Forces during Operation Defensive Shield, and tried in the Tel Aviv District Court (Serious Crimes File 1158/02). On May 20, 2004, he was convicted of premeditated murder, attempted murder, and membership and activity in a terrorist organization, and he was sentenced to five cumulative terms of life imprisonment and a further 40 years imprisonment.



possession. Weapons also came into its possession by way of smuggling from Jordan and Egypt, or through connections with criminal elements in Israel. Even prior to the outbreak of the present conflict, the Tanzim played a notable part in two violent clashes with the Israeli security forces: in the events that accompanied the opening of the Western Wall Tunnels in September 1996, and the Naqba Day events of May 2000.<sup>15</sup> However, the Tanzim's acts of violence intensified since the end of September 2000, and became large scale terrorist attacks.

### **The Arms of Fatah in the Present Conflict – the Appearance on the Scene of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades**

Upon the commencement of the present conflict, Fatah operatives, many of whom were employed in the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus, began to be involved in terrorist activity against Israeli targets. In the first stages of the conflict, this activity took the form of shooting attacks and placing of bombs within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, against Israel Defense Forces units and against Israeli civilians. Thus, for example, toward the end of 2000 and at the beginning of 2001, members of Force 17 carried out a series of shooting attacks on the roads of the West Bank against Israeli vehicles.<sup>16</sup> Fatah's military activity was conducted in this period through two higher committees – one in the Gaza Strip and the other in the West Bank. At the head of the Higher Committee for the West Bank stood Marwan Barghouti.<sup>17</sup> It should be emphasized that not all elements within the Fatah movement sided with the use of terrorism as a means of achieving the political goals of the Palestinians. Within the Fatah movement, there were also voices that opposed the use of terrorism in general or the expansion of terrorist attacks to within the Green Line. Opposing them, other elements in Fatah, particularly among members of the Tanzim, were afraid of abandoning the arena in the hands of the Islamic organizations, and argued that it was the Fatah movement that must lead the armed conflict against Israel.<sup>18</sup> Thus, at

<sup>15</sup> The "Naqba" ("*Naqbat Filastin*" or "*al-Naqba*") is, in the Palestinians' view, the disaster caused to the Palestinians as a result of the establishment of the State of Israel. Hence Israel Independence Day is referred to among the Palestinians as "Naqba Day."

<sup>16</sup> Among others, the following terrorist attacks are attributed to Force 17: a shooting attack near Ofra on November 13, 2000 (one person killed); a shooting attack near Givat Ze'ev on December 20, 2000 (one killed); a shooting attack near Ofra on December 31, 2000 (2 killed and 5 wounded); and shooting attacks in northern Jerusalem on January 29, 2001 (one killed). See the website of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (hereinafter: ICT): <http://www.ict.org.il>

<sup>17</sup> From an opinion submitted by the head of the Research Division in the Israel Defense Forces' Intelligence Branch, Brigadier-General Y. Kuperwasser, during the trial of Marwan Barghouti, as quoted in the verdict in Serious Crimes File 1158/02 (Tel Aviv – Jaffa District Court), *State of Israel v. Marwan bin Khatib Barghouti* (hereinafter: the Barghouti verdict), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> This, for example, was the position of Barghouti himself. In his interrogation by the Israel Security Agency, Barghouti claimed that "the leaders of Fatah were afraid of their power being weakened in the Palestinian street, compared with the Islamic movements, something that spurred them to take the line of terrorist attacks against Israel" (ibid., p. 7). Barghouti also claimed that "striking at the settlements is the same as striking at the army, and so on this matter there was no debate within Fatah." (p. 8). On the other hand, elsewhere he claimed that "in the debate conducted within the Palestinian Authority and Fatah regarding the type of terrorist attacks against Israel – he and Arafat espoused the line that states that they should focus on terrorist attacks against the Israel Defense Forces and



the beginning of the conflict the activities of the Tanzim's members were characterized by shooting attacks on the roads of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but within a short time they began to carry out large-scale suicide attacks on buses and other public places within the Green Line. The Tanzim was also the first group to begin carrying out terrorist attacks by use of female suicide terrorists.<sup>19</sup>

During the months of October-November 2000, Tanzim operatives established the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which were intended to serve as the Fatah's military wing for carrying out terrorist attacks against Israel.<sup>20</sup> Israeli security sources claim that the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades is, in fact, a cover name for the terrorist organization of Fatah operatives, which publicly takes responsibility for acts of terror.<sup>21</sup> The Brigades operate as networks of underground cells, and their principle strongholds are in the cities of the West Bank and the refugee camps in their vicinity. Often members of the Palestinian Authority's security forces were also among the Brigades' commanders and the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on their behalf.<sup>22</sup> In March 2002, following a suicide terrorist attack that was carried out by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Jerusalem, the United States State Department added them to its list of foreign terrorist organizations. This was the first time that the Bush administration took such measures against an entity directly connected with the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Yassir Arafat.

The Tanzim in the West Bank served as a means for transferring funds from the Palestinian Authority to operatives in the field and the brigades' infra-structure and their sources of funding were based on it.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the members of the brigades have a great deal of independence in planning and executing the terrorist attacks. During the present conflict they have increased

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the settlers, while leaders such as Abu Ala and Abu Mazen opposed any kind of violence; only a few of the Fatah people supported terrorist attacks within Israel" (ibid.). Barghouti admitted that, at a certain stage, Fatah began to carry out suicide terrorist attacks within Israel, and explained this by the fact that Fatah "was dragged into this activity so as not to leave control on the ground to the Islamic organizations" (ibid.). The Court stated in its verdict that Barghouti indeed opposed, in principle, terrorist attacks within the boundaries of the Green Line, and particularly suicide terrorist attacks, "but in fact, he did not cease to support his people, and assist them by supplying money and weapons, even when he was repeatedly aware that they were carrying out terrorist attacks, including suicide terrorist attacks, within Israel" (p. 74).

<sup>19</sup> Seven women carried out suicide terrorist attacks in the present conflict. The first was a female suicide terrorist from the Tanzim, who blew herself up in a clothing store in Jerusalem in January 2002.

<sup>20</sup> In the verdict in the Barghouti case, the Court stated that Barghouti himself set up the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Barghouti verdict). According to ICT, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were set up by Tanzim operatives in the Balata Refugee Camp, near Nablus (<http://www.ict.org.il/organizations/orgdet.cfm?orgid=83>).

<sup>21</sup> Barghouti verdict, p. 6; Intelligence Branch – Research Division, **The Palestinian Terrorist organizations**, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Thus, for example, Ibrahim Hasouna, a member of the "Maritime Police" who served in Nablus, carried out the terrorist attack at Maariv intersection in Tel Aviv on March 5, 2002 (3 killed and 31 wounded) in the name of the al-Aqsa Martyrs; Ali Ja'ara, a member of the Palestinian Police from the Bethlehem region, carried out a suicide terrorist attack on the No. 19 bus in Jerusalem on January 29, 2004 (11 killed and 50 wounded), also in the name of the al-Aqsa Martyrs – [http://intelligence.org.il/sp/c\\_t/sec/sec\\_fb.htm](http://intelligence.org.il/sp/c_t/sec/sec_fb.htm).

<sup>23</sup> Documents seized by the Israel Defense Forces during Operation Defensive Shield show that the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades would apply to the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Yassir Arafat, requesting assistance with money and weapons: **Barghouti verdict**, pp. 6-9.

and strengthened cooperation with the Islamic terrorist organizations, both in initiating and executing terrorist attacks. At the same time, their increasing reliance on financial and logistic aid from the Hezbollah organization and from Iran contributed to their being distanced, to a certain extent, from the parent movement – Fatah – to “rebelliousness” on the part of the operatives, and to an increase in the anarchy that exists on the ground.

To complete the picture, we would mention that the present conflict led to a disintegration of the organizational structure of the Fatah movement, a weakening of its standing in the Palestinian street, and an intensification of the intergenerational struggles within it.<sup>24</sup> One expression of this is the splitting off of independent terrorist organizations from Fatah, such as the “**Popular Resistance Committees**” in Gaza, headed by Jamal Abu Samhadana, and the “Fatah Abu Raish” group, operating in the Rafiah area. The events of July 2004 in the Gaza Strip, during which Fatah operatives from the various frameworks clashed with one another, are further evidence of this trend.

Over the course of the present conflict, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades have become the leaders in terrorist attacks from within the West Bank. The various arms of Fatah in general, and the Brigades in particular, were responsible for about one half (47%) of all the terrorist attacks against Israel carried out by the terrorist organizations, and for a third (33%) of all the fatalities on the Israeli side.<sup>25</sup> The majority of victims were killed in suicide terrorist attacks carried out by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, among them:

- A terrorist attack at the entrance to a yeshiva on March 2, 2002 (11 killed and 40 wounded);
- A terrorist attack in Neve Shaanan Street in Tel Aviv on January 5, 2003 (23 killed and 100 wounded);
- A terrorist attack at Ashdod Port, in cooperation with Hamas, on March 14, 2004 (10 killed and 16 wounded).

<sup>24</sup> Intelligence Branch – Research Division, **The Palestinian Terrorist organizations**, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> These data are taken from the website of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya (<http://www.ict.org.il>). According to this source, from late September 2000 to early June 2004, 257 people were killed and 1,361 people were wounded in 153 terrorist attacks carried out by the arms of Fatah (the data does not include guerilla attacks against military targets, and includes only those incidents in which there was at least one victim).



**Leftist Fronts****The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)****General Characteristics**

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine organization was, at its inception, a Marxist-Leninist organization. It was one of the first Palestinian organizations to make use of the weapon of terrorism as a means of directing world public opinion toward the Palestinian question. Over the years, it carried out a long series of terrorist attacks in the international arena, primarily aircraft hijackings. It is considered the second most important organization (following Fatah) in the PLO coalition.

**The Organization's Establishment**

The organization was established on December 11, 1967, by the merger of a number of Palestinian leftist organizations. Its founders were Dr. George Habash, a Greek-Orthodox Christian born in Lod, and Dr. Wadie Hadad.

**Ideology**

Initially, the organization combined a Marxist-Leninist ideology with Palestinian nationalism, and saw itself as the "progressive vanguard of the Palestinian working class."<sup>26</sup> Its declared goal: the liberation of the whole of Palestine through armed struggle, and the establishment of a democratic, socialist Palestinian state. Similarly, the organization saw the elimination of the State of Israel as a means of driving imperialism from the Middle East and eradicating the Arab regimes that were, in its view, bourgeois, dictatorial regimes that groveled before Western

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.ict.org.il/organizations/orgdet.cfm?orgid=31>

capitalism. In recent years the organization's positions have moderated, but it still maintains its opposition to the Oslo Accords.

#### Structure and Leadership of the Organization

The structure of the organization is similar to that of Fatah, and it has three principal institutions: the National Convention (a kind of Parliament representing the public), the Central Committee, and the Political Bureau, which serves as the executive branch. At the head of the leadership is the organization's General Secretary.<sup>27</sup> The organization's founder, Dr. George Habash, led it from 1967 to his retirement in May 2000. His successor, Mustapha Ali Qassam al-Zabiri (alias Abu Ali Mustapha) was elected as the General Secretary of the organization, and served in that position until he was killed by the Israel Defense Forces in August 2001. His place in the organization's leadership was taken by Ahmed Sa'adat, currently imprisoned in Jericho. In 1999, the organization moved its headquarters from Damascus to Ramallah. Its political leadership is located partly in Syria and partly in the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, within which the organization has a rather small operational infrastructure.<sup>28</sup>

#### Support and Funding

The organization currently receives support from Syria and financial aid from organizations and from private donors in Arab countries. In the past, it received considerable support from Iraq, as well as from other countries such as Libya, the Soviet Union, members of the Communist Bloc (Warsaw Pact), China and North Korea. In the past, the organization maintained military and other ties with other organizations elsewhere in the world, such as the Japanese Red Army, the German Baader-Meinhof group, and the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

#### Milestones in the History of the Organization

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| 1968 | In November, the organization carried out its first hijacking (of an El Al aircraft on its way from Rome to Tel Aviv; it was forced to land in Algeria). One month later, it attacked an Israeli aircrew at the airport in Athens. In response, Israel destroyed 13 aircraft at Beirut Airport.  |
| 1970 | In September, the organization carried out its most notorious operation: the combined hijackings of four passenger aircraft belonging to Western airlines – three to Zarqa in Jordan and one to Egypt – and blowing them up on the ground after removing their passengers. This action led to the events of "Black September" and the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan to Lebanon. |

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Education, Information Center-Publications Service, **Fatah, Tanzim, Hamas and Others: A Guide to Palestinian Organizations**, p. 32.

<sup>28</sup> Intelligence Branch – Research Division, **The Palestinian Terrorist organizations**, p. 10.



- 1972 In May, the organization carried out an attack on the airport at Lod, with the cooperation of Kozo Okamoto and other members of the Japanese Red Army. Twenty four people were killed in the attack. The operation was conceived by Dr. Wadie Hadad, the operations chief of the Popular Front, who represented the militant line within the organization (following the attack he began to operate independently, as an offshoot of the Popular Front, and was responsible, among other things, for the hijacking of the Air France plane to Entebbe in June 1976).<sup>29</sup>
- 1974 The Popular Front broke away from the PLO, after the latter accepted the "Phased Plan," and with representatives of other organizations established the "Rejectionist Front".<sup>30</sup> In the years that followed, it concentrated its activity on the local front, carrying out attacks in Israel, Jordan and Lebanon.
- 1993-1999 In the wake of the signing of the Oslo Accords, the organization once again withdrew from the PLO (after having rejoined in the late 1980s). The organization also forbade its members from participating in the elections that were held by the Palestinian Authority in 1996. Nonetheless, in 1999, it conducted negotiations in Cairo with representatives of Fatah and the PLO on conditions for a reconciliation between the organizations and national unification. In that year, Abu Ali Mustapha also received approval from the Israeli authorities to enter the territories that are [controlled by] the Palestinian Authority and, in accordance with that which has been set forth above, he moved his headquarters from Damascus to Ramallah.

#### The Organization's Activity in the Present Conflict

Since the outbreak of the present conflict, the organization has gone back to carrying out terrorist attacks against Israel, including the detonation of car bombs, the placement of bombs, shooting attacks and suicide terrorist attacks.<sup>31</sup> On August 27, 2001, Israel assassinated the organization's leader, Abu Ali Mustapha. Ahmed Sa'adat, who was associated with the members of the Popular

<sup>29</sup> In 1978 he died in East Germany, and was buried in Baghdad. His organization ceased to operate following his death.

<sup>30</sup> The "Phased Plan" held that the Palestinians should agree to establish a Palestinian state within the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip when Israel withdraws from these areas, as a tactical step and as a first stage only on the way to achieving their final goals. Those opposed to the plan argued that realization of this stage would limit the freedom of action of the Palestinians fighting to liberate Palestine as a whole, and in effect that tactical step may become a strategic reality that would prevent the Palestinian people from exercising its national rights. The Rejectionist Front, set up at that time, included those Palestinian organizations, and some Arab states (Iraq, Libya) who totally rejected the possibility of a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

<sup>31</sup> According to data published on the ICT website (<http://www.ict.org.il>), from late September 2000 to early June 2004, 16 people were killed and 49 were wounded in 10 terrorist attacks carried out by the Popular Front (the data does not include guerilla attacks against military targets, and includes only those incidents in which there was at least one victim).

Front's radical wing, was appointed on October 3 as the organization's General Secretary, and since then the organization's involvement in terrorist attacks has increased. On October 17 of that year, the organization claimed responsibility for the murder of Tourism Minister Rechavam Ze'evi (Ghandi). In May 2002, as a result of Israeli and international pressure on the Palestinian Authority, those who were involved in the Minister's murder, among them Sa'adat himself, were transferred from the Muqata'a in Ramallah to a Palestinian prison in Jericho. Among the terrorist attacks carried out by the organization were:

- A suicide terrorist attack at the shopping center in Karnei Shomron on February 16, 2002 (3 killed and 25 wounded);
- A terrorist attack in Itamar on June 20, 2002 (5 killed, including a mother and three of her children, and 8 wounded);
- A suicide terrorist attack at Geha Junction on December 25, 2003 (4 killed and 20 wounded).





### **The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC)**

#### **The Organization's Establishment**

The organization was established on April 24, 1968, by Ahmed Jibril, a former Syrian Army officer. Jibril had been active in the Palestinian struggle against Israel since 1959, when he founded his first organization, the Palestine Liberation Front. In 1967, his organization merged with George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, but the alliance did not last, and a year later Jibril left Habash's organization on a background of conflicts between it and the Syrian regime. The split was also on ideological grounds, since Jibril opposed any involvement in political activity, and demanded that the focus be solely on armed struggle against Israel.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Ideology**

Initially, the organization held views of a Marxist nature, but at the same time refrained from presenting an organized ideological doctrine. Its approach to the Palestinian question was characterized by a negation of Israel's right to exist, and the view that armed struggle was the only way to realize the rights of the Palestinians. The motto appearing on the organization's emblem: "Return, Combat, Liberation"

#### **Structure of the Organization and its Leadership**

Since its inception, the organization has been headed by Ahmed Jibril. His headquarters is located in Damascus. The bulk of its operational infrastructure is in Syria and Lebanon, where its bases are located (among them the Ein Saheb camp, attacked by the Israel Defense Forces on October 5, 2003), and from which it operates in carrying out terrorist attacks.

<sup>32</sup> David Tal, "The International Dimension of PFLP-GC Activity," in <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articleDet.cfm?articleid=25>.

### Support and Funding

The organization relies on Syria, operates under its auspices, and has received military aid from it since it was established. In 1987, the organization began to develop close ties with Iran and Hezbollah,<sup>33</sup> and in recent years also with Hamas.

### Milestones since the Organization's Establishment

- 1970s      The organization carried out a series of showcase mass terrorist attacks, among them the explosion of a Swissair aircraft with all of its passengers on its way to Lod (February 21, 1970), the terrorist attack on the bus carrying the children of Kibbutz Avivim, which claimed 12 lives (May 21, 1970) and another terrorist attack in Kiryat Shemona, which took 18 lives, among them 8 children (April 11, 1974).
- 1980s      In the summer of 1982, the organization took three Israeli soldiers prisoner in Lebanon (Hezi Shai, Nissim Salem and Yosef Groff). Three years later it was able to bring about a prisoner deal with Israel, in which 1,150 Palestinian prisoners and detainees were released in exchange for the release of the three soldiers (May 20, 1985, the "Jibril Exchange"). On November 25, 1987, a terrorist sent by the organization infiltrated an Israeli military camp using a glider, killing six soldiers and wounding seven others ("Night of the Gliders").

### The Organization's Activity in the Present Conflict

The organization's activity over the course of the present conflict has been limited. To date, it has manifested mainly in the form of training terrorists in the organization's camps in Lebanon, attempts to send them from there to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel, and attempts to smuggle war materiel from Lebanon to the territory of the Palestinian Authority, for example, on the weapons ship Santorini, which was captured by the Israel Navy on its way to Gaza on May 6, 2001.

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<sup>33</sup> Shaul Shai, *Terrorism in the Name of the Imam: 20 Years of Shiite Terrorism*, pp. 60-63.



### **The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)**

#### **The Organization's Establishment**

The "Democratic Front" organization was founded on February 22, 1969, by Nayef Hawatmeh, a Jordanian born Greek Orthodox Christian, who had split off from George Habash's Popular Front.

#### **Ideology**

Initially, the organization held to a Marxist-Leninist ideology, and its operatives even attempted, in the early 1970s, to set up soviets (councils) and kolkhozes in northern Jordan.<sup>34</sup> The organization viewed the majority of the regimes in the Middle East as reactionary regimes that should be deposed, to be replaced by revolutionary-socialist regimes. As early as 1969, its leaders proposed the establishment of a "Popular Democratic State of Palestine," in which the Jews would be able to "develop their culture," but not their national identity. Over the years, and particularly ever since the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon (1982), the organization has expressed rather moderate positions on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which for the most part were consistent with those of the Fatah movement.<sup>35</sup>

#### **The Organization's Leadership**

As with the other main organizations within the PLO, the Democratic Front also constructed a hierarchical apparatus, in which there were three main bodies: the Central Committee, the Political Bureau and the General Council. The General Secretary, Nayef Hawatmeh, and the senior members of the organization reside in Syria, but part of its political leadership resides in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It also maintains a small operational arm in the Gaza Strip.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Support and Funding**

The organization receives support from Syria, and also receives funding from organizations and private contributors in Arab countries. In the past it also received aid from Libya, and its members trained in the Soviet Union and in Cuba.

<sup>34</sup> Avraham Sela, *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*, p. 686; Guy Bechor, *PLO Lexicon*, Ministry of Defense Publishing House, Tel Aviv 5755 [=1995].

<sup>35</sup> Intelligence Branch – Research Division, *The Palestinian Terrorist organizations*, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

### Milestones in the Organization's History

- Early 1970s Initially the organization objected to the perpetration of showcase mass terrorist attacks, along the lines of the terrorist attacks that were perpetrated by the Popular Front, since these could create negative public opinion toward the Palestinian struggle. The organization established ties with revolutionary movements and Marxist elements throughout the world, and even in Israel (for example, with the *Derech Hanitzotz* group).
- 1973 The organization proposed, for the first time, the establishment of a Palestinian state on both sides of the Jordan River, outside of the 1948 borders, as a first step in what was termed as the "Phased Plan." In that year it also began carrying out terrorist attacks in Israel.
- 1974-1975 The organization carries out a series of terrorist operations, among them the massacre at a school in Maalot, on May 15, 1974 (27 killed), the seizure of a residential building in Beit Shean on November 19, 1974 (4 killed), and the detonation of a wagon that was rigged with explosives in Jerusalem on November 13, 1975 (7 killed).
- Late 1980s A breach in the organization's ranks occurred between Hawatmeh and his supporters, who espoused a continuation of armed struggle against Israel, and Yasser Abed Rabbo and his people, who sided with adopting the path of negotiations.
- Last 1990s Notwithstanding Hawatmeh's opposition to the Oslo Accords, at a conference of the Rejectionist organizations in Damascus in December 1998, he proposed consideration of political solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, thus raising against himself the ire of the leaders of the other organizations. In September 1999, his organization expressed willingness to participate in negotiations with Israel on a permanent status agreement.<sup>37</sup> One month later, the State Department in the United States removed the organization's name from its list of terrorist organizations.

### The Organization's Activity in the Present Conflict

Its operational activity is limited. The organization's most significant operation was a guerilla attack on an Israel Defense Forces position in the Gaza Strip (the Marganit position) on August 25, 2001 (3 killed and 7 wounded).

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.ict.org.il/organizations/orgdet.cfm?orgid=11>



**Organizations that no longer Exist**<sup>38</sup>**Fatah – The Revolutionary Council (Abu Nidal Organization)**

A pro-Iraqi organization under the leadership of Sabri al-Banna (Abu Nidal); it was founded in 1974 following the resignation of its leader from the Fatah movement.<sup>39</sup> In the 1980s, it was considered the most murderous and dangerous of the Palestinian terrorist organizations. Over the course of its years of activity, the organization carried out acts of terrorism against Arab countries (Syria, Jordan and the Persian Gulf states) more than any other organization, and even murdered 16 PLO diplomats. In the 1980s, the organization also attacked Jewish and Israeli targets, among them an Israeli school in Antwerp (1980), synagogues in Vienna (1981), Brazil (1982) and Istanbul (1986), a Jewish restaurant in Paris (1982) and El Al passengers at Rome and Vienna airports (1985). In 1982, the organization attempted to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in London, Shlomo Argov. Following the attempted assassination, Israel launched the Lebanon War. During the 1990s, the organization's terrorist activities ceased. In 2002 Abu Nidal died in Baghdad.

**The Palestine Liberation Front**

The organization was formed on April 24, 1977, following a split from Jibril's Popular Front – General Command. Its leaders were Mohamed Abbas Zaidan (Abu al-Abbas) and Talat Yaqub. On April 22, 1979, one of the organization's cells infiltrated from Tyre to Nahariya, and murdered four Israelis, among them three members of the Haran family (a father and his two daughters). Among the perpetrators of the attack was Samir Kuntar, whose release from Israeli prison is now being demanded by Hezbollah in return for information on the fate of navigator Ron Arad. In October 1985, one of the organization's cells seized the Italian passenger liner *Achille Lauro* and murdered one of its passengers, Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair bound American Jew. In April 2003, Abu al-Abbas was arrested by the American forces in Baghdad, and he subsequently died while in prison.

<sup>38</sup> The overview in this chapter does not presume to encompass all the terrorist organizations that have operated in the past in the Palestinian – Israeli arena, but only to serve as a reminder of the terrorist activity of some of the dominant organizations. It is based on these sources: Guy Bechor, **PLO Lexicon**; ICT website: <http://www.ict.org.il>; Avraham Sela, **The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East**.

<sup>39</sup> In October 1973, a Fatah court martial sentenced Abu Nidal (in absentia) to death for the crime of having plotted to murder Yassir Arafat. Iraq helped him escape to Baghdad, and there he established the headquarters of his new organization, and operated in the service of the Iraqi regime. In the early 1980s, as a result of a breach between himself and the Iraqi leadership, the organization was expelled from Baghdad and moved to Damascus.

**The Arab Liberation Front**

A Palestinian organization with a clear pro-Iraqi line, founded by the regime in Baghdad on April 6, 1969. Among others, the organization carried out a terrorist attack in Kfar Yuval on the northern border in 1975, and seized the children's house on Kibbutz Misgav Am in 1980 (3 killed and 16 wounded). During the Lebanon War, the infrastructure of the organization was destroyed, and since the 1980s it has not carried out acts of terror.



## The Islamic Organizations

### Palestinian Organizations



### Hamas

#### Meaning of the Name

Hamas is the initials of *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah*, “Islamic Resistance Movement”. Additionally, the word “Hamas” means enthusiasm, fervor, bravery, courage and zealotry.<sup>40</sup>

#### The Establishment of the Movement

The Hamas movement was established in Gaza in December 1987, at the outbreak of the First Intifada, by Sheikh Ahmed Ismail Yassin, as the political and military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. It grew out of this movement,<sup>41</sup> whose leader in Gaza since 1968 was

<sup>40</sup> Avraham Sela, *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*, p. 335; website of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT): <http://www.ict.org.il/organizations/orgdet.cfm?orgid=13>

<sup>41</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood movement (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) was established in Ismailia, Egypt, in 1928, by Sheikh Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) with the aim of returning the Arab public to the bosom of Islam through education, preaching and charitable activity. In the mid-1940s, the first Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was dedicated in Jerusalem, as a branch of the movement in Egypt, and in 1947 there were 38 branches of the movement in Palestine, with over 10,000 registered members. In the 1970s and 1980s the Muslim Brotherhood increased its power and influence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. One indication of this was the significant increase in the number of mosques, which were the focal points for its activity. According to various sources, from 1967 to the last 1980s, their number in the Gaza Strip grew threefold. See: Yaakov Habakkuk and Salah Shakib, *Terrorism in the Name of Islam: A Profile of the Hamas Movement*, pp. 29-35; Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *Hamas Time: Violence and Compromise*, pp. 37-43.

Sheikh Yassin, and out of the Islamic Center (*al-Mujamma al-Islami*), a group that was established by Yassin in 1973 and which he headed.

Al-Mujamma was established as a voluntary association for social and cultural purposes,<sup>42</sup> and since 1978, it has operated with the approval of the Israeli military administration. Although its leaders saw Israel as a religious and national enemy, they initially refrained from violent action against it, working mainly to repair Palestinian society from within and to fight the secular nationalist influences within it, particularly those of the Left.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, as a result of the Lebanon War and the expulsion of PLO forces from Beirut, there was a growing feeling among the leadership of al-Mujamma and of the Muslim Brotherhood that they needed to prepare themselves to be an alternative to the PLO and to commence military action against Israel. They began to arm themselves, but Israel exposed their organization, and in 1984 Yassin was arrested and sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment. In May 1985, after 11 months of imprisonment, he was released from prison as part of the Jibril Exchange.

Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela are of the opinion that Hamas was established to a large extent as a result of "pressure from below" on the part of Muslim Brotherhood and al-Mujamma activists, who pushed the leadership, led by Yassin, to adopt a belligerent line. According to them, at the beginning of December 1987, with the outbreak of the popular uprising in Gaza (the First Intifada) and in light of the enthusiasm that drew the masses of young Palestinians to participate in acts of protest, resistance and violence, Yassin and his people were afraid of losing influence and the ability to act, vis-à-vis the PLO on one side and the Islamic Jihad on the other. Their decision to establish Hamas reflected their recognition of the need to adapt to "a new reality of a climate of militancy that has taken hold of the Palestinian street."<sup>44</sup> On December 14, 1987, five days after the outbreak of the riots, the movement issued its first proclamation.

### Ideology

The Hamas movement carries two banners, which in its view are interlinked: the Islamic-religious banner and the banner of Palestinian national liberation. Its main goal is the establishment of a state that is ruled by Islamic law over the entire territory of Palestine, from the sea to the [Jordan] river, through holy war (*jihad*) against Israel. For Hamas, the struggle against Israel is not a conflict between two national movements, but rather part of the religious struggle between Western civilization and Islamic civilization. Therefore, according to Hamas, the

<sup>42</sup> Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, p. 42.

<sup>43</sup> Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela argue that, up to the First Intifada, the association preferred the "internal *jihad*" within the Muslim committee over the "external *jihad*" directed at Israel and the West. The association's founders felt that the external *jihad* should be deferred until the establishment of the Islamic state, which would take responsibility for its implementation. In addition, they saw the very existence of Israel as an outcome of the abandonment of the way of Islam, and so the "Islamicization" of Palestinian society was, in their view, a prerequisite for the ability of the Muslims to defeat Israel. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.



Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot end through political compromise.<sup>45</sup> The movement's Charter of August 1988 expresses its guiding ideas and goals. Following are selected excerpts from it:<sup>46</sup>

**Uniqueness and Independence – Section 6:**

“The Islamic Resistance Movement is a unique Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose devotion is to Islam as a way of life. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam, followers of all religions can live with security and safety for their lives, property and rights.”

**The Motto of the Islamic Resistance Movement – Section 8:**

“Allah is its goal, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution, *jihad* is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its aspirations.”

**The Strategy of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Palestine is an Islamic Waqf – Section 11:**

“The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf belonging to future Muslim generations until Judgment Day. It, or any part of it, should not be given up.”

**Peaceful Solutions, Initiatives and International Conferences – Section 13:**

“Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences to solve the Palestinian question, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement. Any abandonment of even an inch of the land of Palestine is an abandonment of part of the religion... There is no solution for the Palestinian question except *jihad*.”

The Organization's Structure and Leadership

The Movement's Leadership

The Hamas movement has two leaderships: an internal [i.e., local] leadership and an external leadership. Up until 1989, the movement was led solely from within, but the arrest of Sheikh Yassin by Israel in that year led to the creation of an external leadership. The external leadership gradually acquired a dominant position; in particular, this was because of its activity to raise

<sup>45</sup> At the same time, Hamas recognizes the need to achieve interim ceasefires (“*hudna*”), particularly in order to avoid conflict with the Palestinian Authority and the regional and international scene, which may harm its public standing.

<sup>46</sup> The quotes are taken from Yaakov Habakkuk and Salah Shakib, pp. 192-216.